

Mr. Beave. for international
conciliation

Boas, Frang

Race and
Nationality.

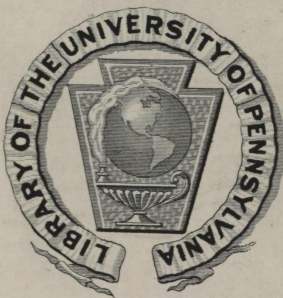
1915

940

92

Am 36.3

1915



940.92
Am 36.3



RACE and NATIONALITY.

Franz Boas.

UNIVERSITY
OF
PENNSYLVANIA
LIBRARY

YU 18 1911
TO
AIR VJYER
YU 18 1911

B.C.

940.92

Am 36.3

1915

RACE AND NATIONALITY



HE struggle that is now devastating Europe has been described as an unavoidable war of races, as an outcome of the innate hostility between Teutonic, Slav, and Latin peoples, that can never be overcome by argument and reason, because it is due to deep-seated "racial instinct." If this were so, we might despair of the future of mankind; for beyond this conflict would arise others without end, as wider and closer international intercourse develops and brings more emphatically into consciousness racial differences like those between Latin-American and Anglo-American, East Indian and European, Mongol or Malay and European. If this view were correct, the so-called "racial instinct" would perpetuate wars of extermination until one race alone survived.

It is true that in our own political and social life the feeling of racial solidarity finds strong expression in our behavior towards Mongol and Negro. It is equally true that in Europe the Slavic world is moved to its depths by the Pan-Slavistic idea; that Germany has been carried far on a wave of admiration for the excellence of the great Teutonic race, and that England rests serene on the unshaken conviction of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon; and yet the emotional value of these ideas does not make clear their rational values.

The term "racial instinct" expresses the ideas that there are definite, insurmountable antipathies based



nationalism

912-15-17.15

on differences of appearance, and that certain hereditary mental characteristics belong to each type of man.

In Europe, the occurrence of local types has led to the concept of distinct races, identified with certain national groups: the blond representing the Teuton; the heavy, darker type, the Slav; and the Mediterranean, the typical Spaniard or Italian.

On account of the peculiar position of the blond type, it has been pre-eminently identified with the so-called Aryan race. As is well known, most of the languages of Europe are derived from one ancient form of speech,—the parental Aryan language. Slavic, Teutonic, and Romance languages are the most important modern divisions of this group in Europe, to which Greek, Celtic, Lithuanian, and Albanian also belong. Among European languages, only Finnish and its relatives on the Baltic, Magyar, Turkish, and Basque, do not belong to this extended group. Aryan languages are spoken by people of the most diverse racial types; nevertheless there are scientists who try to identify the blond north-European with the ancient pure Aryan, and who claim for the race pre-eminent hereditary gifts, because the people who at present and in our concept are the leaders of the world speak Aryan languages.

Scientific proof of these contentions cannot be given. They are rather fancies of north-European dreamers, based on the complaisant love of the achievements of the blondes. No one has ever proved either that all the Aryans of the earliest times were blondes, or that people speaking other languages may not have been blond, too; and nobody would be able to show that the great achievements of mankind were due to blond thinkers. On the contrary, the men to whom we are indebted for the basic advance of civil-

ization belong to the dark-complexioned human types of the Orient, Greece, and Italy, and not to our blond ancestors.

How deep and emotional a hold this idea has in the minds of some scientists appears when some investigators try to show us that Christ cannot have been a Jew by descent, but must have been an Aryan.

THE GREAT BLOND ARYAN—A FICTION

The idea of the great blond Aryan, the leader of mankind, is the result of self-admiration that emotional thinkers have tried to sustain by imaginative reasoning. It has no foundation in observed fact. This, however, does not decrease the emotional value of the fiction that has taken hold of minds wherever the Teutonic, German, or Anglo-Saxon type—however it may be called—prevails. ✓

It is not the pre-eminence of the blonde alone that appeals to the fancy in northwest-European countries: all over Europe we find the idea of racial purity, and of the existence of certain features inherent in each race that make it superior to all others; while it is assumed that the mixed, "mongrel" races are doomed to permanent inferiority. This notion prevails among ourselves with equal force, for we shake our heads gravely over the ominous influx of "inferior" races from eastern Europe. Inferior by heredity? No. Socially different? Yes, on account of the environment in which they have lived, and therefore different from ourselves, and not easily subject to change provided they are allowed to cluster together indefinitely. Equally strong is our fear of the mongrelization of the American people by intermixtures between the northwest-European and other European types.

Scientific investigation does not countenance the

assumption that in any one part of Europe a people of pure descent or of a pure racial type is found, and careful inquiry has failed completely to reveal any inferiority of mixed European types.

TYPE AND RACE DO NOT COINCIDE

In our imagination the local racial types of Europe have been identified with the modern nations, and thus the supposed hereditary characteristics of the races have been confused with national characteristics. An identification of racial type, of language, and of nationality has been made, that has gained an exceedingly strong hold on our imagination. In vain sober scientific thought has remonstrated against this identification; the idea is too firmly rooted. Even if it is true that the blond type is found at present pre-eminently among Teutonic people, it is not confined to them alone. Among the Finns, Poles, French, North Italians, not to speak of the North African Berbers and the Kurds of western Asia, there are many individuals of this type. The heavy-set, dark East-European type is common to many of the Slavic peoples of eastern Europe, to the Germans of Austria and southern Germany, to the North Italians, and to the French of the Alps and of central France. The Mediterranean type is spread widely over Spain, Italy, Greece, and the coast of Asia Minor, without regard to national boundaries.

In western Europe, types are distributed in strata that follow one another from north to south,—in the north the blonde, in the center a dark, short-headed type, in the south the slightly built Mediterranean type.

National boundaries in central Europe, on the other hand, run north and south: and so we find the north-

ern French, Belgian, Hollander, German, and Russian to be about the same in type and descent; the central French, South German, Swiss, North Italian, Austrian, Servian, and central Russian, to be all the same variety of man; and the southern French, to be closely related to the types of the eastern and western Mediterranean area.

At the present moment the relation of German and Slav is of principal interest. During the period of Teutonic migrations, in the first few centuries of our era, the Slavs settled in the whole region from which Teutonic tribes had moved away. They occupied the whole of what is now eastern Germany. In the Middle Ages, with the growth of the German Empire, a slow backward movement set in. Germans settled as colonists in Slavic territory, and by degrees German speech prevailed over the Slavic. In Germany, survivals of the gradual process may be found in a few remote localities where Slavic speech still persists. As by contact with the more advanced Germans the cultural and economic conditions of the Slav improved, his resistance to Germanization became greater and greater,—earliest among the Czechs and Poles, later in the other Slavic groups.

This process has led to the present distribution of languages, which expresses a fossilization of German colonization in the east, and illustrates in a most striking way the penetration of peoples. Poland and part of Russia, Slavonic and Magyar territories, are interspersed with small German settlements, which are the more sparse and scattered the farther east they are located, the more continuous the nearer they lie to Germany.

With the increased economic and cultural strength of the Slav, the German lost his ability to impose his mode of life upon him, and with it his power to assimilate

late the numerically stronger people in its own home. But by blood all these people, no matter what their speech, are the same.

✓ In short, *there is no war of races in Europe*; for in every single nationality concerned in the present struggle the various elements of the European population are represented, and arrayed against the same elements as grouped together in another nationality. The conflict has nothing whatever to do with racial descent. The so-called racial antipathies are feelings that have grown up on another basis and have been given a fictitious racial interpretation.

If we deny the presence of racial contrasts, it may not be amiss to say a word on the fact that we may distinguish with more or less uncertainty individuals that belong to distinct nationalities. This common experience might seem contradictory to what has been said before; but we form concepts of national types partly from essential elements of the form of the body, partly from the mannerisms of wearing hair and beard, and also from the characteristic expressions and motions of the body, which are determined not so much by hereditary causes as by habit. On the whole, the latter are more impressive than the former; and among the nations that are concerned in the present struggle, no fundamental traits of the body occur that belong to one to the exclusion of the others.

It is clear that the term *race* is only a disguise of the idea of *nationality*, which has really very, very little to do with racial descent; and that the passions that have been let loose are those of national enmities, not of racial antipathies.

If community of racial descent is not the basis of nationality, is it community of language?

When we glance at the national aspirations that have characterized a large part of the nineteenth

century, community of language might seem to be the background of national life. It touches the most sympathetic chords in our hearts. Italians worked for the overthrow of all the small local and great foreign interests that were opposed to the national unity of all Italian-speaking people. German patriots strove for the federation of the German-speaking people in one empire. The struggles in the Balkans are largely due to a desire for national independence according to the limits of speech. The Poles are longing for a re-establishment of their state which is to embrace all those of Polish tongue.

WITHOUT THE BOND OF LANGUAGE

Still this does not comprise the whole of nationalism, for no less ardent is the patriotism of bilingual Belgium and of trilingual Switzerland. Even here in America we see that the bond of tongue is not the only one. Else we should feel that there is no reason for a division between Canada and the United States, and that the political ties between western Canada and French Quebec must be artificial. Neither would it be intelligible why modern Germany should never have pursued the policy of unifying all German-speaking peoples in Europe, why she should not covet the large German provinces of Austria, and should patiently witness the forcible Russianization of the German towns in the Baltic provinces and the Magyarization of the Germans in Hungary.

Neither the bonds of blood nor those of language alone make a nation. It is rather the community of emotional life that rises from our every-day habits, from the forms of our thoughts, feelings, and actions, which constitute the medium in which every individual can unfold freely his activities.

Language and nation are so often identified, because we feel that among a people that uses the same language every one can find the widest field for unrestricted activity. Added to this is the powerful idea of political unity, which emphasizes the interests of the citizen as opposed to those of the foreigners. These beliefs combine to create a sense of national unity. Nevertheless it is perfectly clear that there is no individual, nor any group of individuals, that represents the national ideal. It is rather an abstraction based on the current forms of thought, feeling, and action,—an abstraction of high emotional value, that is further enhanced by the consciousness of political power.

It is well to bear in mind that nationality is not necessarily based on unity of speech; for when the same type of cultural ideals prevails in a polyglottal area, in which each group is too weak to give to the individual a free field of action, this can be attained only by the development of a union of the independent groups. Those who claim on a *a priori* ground that there cannot be any Austrian patriotism on account of the polyglottal mixture that is found in the empire, might do well to consider that during the past seventy years a co-ordination of the various linguistic groups has slowly developed. Against the wishes of the Monarchy, Hungary has gained its independence of German domination; and during the last few decades the Government of Austria itself, much against the clamor of the German element, has given due recognition to the wishes of the Slavic population. In all this we see the beginning of a new national life, probably the only one that can lead to a free unfolding of human activity in this region that is split up like no other part of Europe.

The attitude of Italy in the present situation illus-

trates also that the linguistic bond is not the only source of national aspirations. While national unity of the Italian-speaking people is their avowed aim, those Italians who have cast their lot with Switzerland are willingly left to themselves. In other areas the ardor with which unity is sought depends upon the historic past. The Italians under Austrian rule appeal most strongly to the Italian imagination, and Austria is reaping her reward for long-continued oppression. This has taken such strong hold of the Italian mind, that the French encroachments in the west, and Mazzini's condemnation of the Third French Republic for not restoring the lost territory, seem to have been forgotten.

For the full development of his faculties, the individual needs the widest possible field in which to live and act according to his modes of thought and inner feeling. Since, in most cases, the opportunity is given among a group that possesses unity of speech, we feel full sympathy with the intense desire to throw down the artificial barriers of small political units. This process has characterized the development of modern nations, and is now active in part of southeastern Europe.

When, however, these limits are overstepped, and a fictitious racial or alleged national unit is set up that has no existence in actual conditions, the free unfolding of powers, for which we are striving, is liable to become an excuse for ambitious lust for power. When France dreamt of a union of all Latin people in a Pan-Latin union under her leadership, the legitimate limits of natural development were lost sight of for the sake of national ambition. If Russia promotes a Pan-Slavistic propaganda among the diverse peoples, solely on the ground that the Slavs are linguistically related, and assumes a fictitious common

racial origin, the actual usefulness of the nationalistic idea is lost sight of, and it is made the cover for the desire of expansion of power.

THE WRONG SIDE OF NATIONALISM

✓ There is no doubt that the idea of nationality has been a creative force, making possible the fuller development of individual powers by widening the field of individual activity, and by setting definite ideals to large co-operating masses; but we feel with Fichte and Mazzini that the political power of a nation is important only when the national unit is the carrier of ideals that are of value to mankind.

Together with the positive, creative side of nationalism, there has developed everywhere another one, which forms the basis of the passions that are blinding the people of Europe to the high aims of humanity. Instead of seeing in each nation one of the members of mankind that contributes in its own way toward the advance of civilization, an aggressive intolerance of all other units has grown up. It is strengthened by the inadaptability of governmental machinery, which favors national isolation.

On a larger scale the conditions are repeated now that less than a century ago prevented the ready formation of modern nations. The narrow-minded local interests of cities and other small political units resisted unification or federation on account of the supposed conflicts between their interests and ideals and those of other units of comparable size. The governmental organization strengthened the tendency to isolation, and the unavoidable, ever-present desire of self-preservation of the existing order stood in the way of amalgamation. It was only after long years

of agitation and of bloody struggle that the larger idea prevailed.

Those of us who recognize in the realization of national ideals a definite advance that has benefited mankind cannot fail to see that the task before us at the present time is a repetition of the process of nationalization on a larger scale; not with a view to levelling down all local differences, but with the avowed purpose of making them all subserve the same end.

The federation of nations is the next necessary step in the evolution of mankind.

It is the expansion of the fundamental idea underlying the organization of the United States, of Switzerland, and of Germany. The weakness of the modern peace movement lies in this, that it is not sufficiently clear and radical in its demand, for its logical aim cannot be an arbitration of disagreements. It must be the recognition of common aims of at least all the nations of European descent. The time is obviously not ripe for demanding an expansion of this idea over the productive members of the non-European races of mankind.

Such federation of nations is not a Utopian idea, any more than nationalism was a century ago. In fact, the whole development of mankind shows that this condition is destined to come. In the earliest period of social development, when human beings lived in small, scattered groups, the unit in which community of interest was recognized was the small horde, and every outsider was considered as specifically distinct and as an enemy who must be killed for the sake of self-preservation. By slow degrees the size of the horde increased and they formed themselves into larger units. The distinction between the members of the tribe and the foreigner was no longer considered as a specific one, al-

though the idea continued to prevail that it was of foremost interest to protect the fellow-tribesman against the foreigner.

Progress has been slow, but almost steady, in the direction of expanding the political units from hordes to tribes, from tribes to small states, confederations, and nations. The concept of the foreigner as a specifically distinct being has been so modified that we are beginning to see in him a member of mankind.

Enlargement of circles of association, and equalization of rights of distinct local communities, have been so consistently the *general* tendency of human development, that we may look forward confidently to its consummation.

It is obvious that the standards of ethical conduct must be quite distinct as between those who have grasped this ideal and those who still believe in the preservation of isolated nationality in opposition to all others. In order to form a fair judgment of the motives of action of the leaders of European nations at the present time, we should bear in mind that in all countries the standards of national ethics, as cultivated by means of national education, are opposed to this wider view. Devotion to the nation is taught as the paramount duty, and it is instilled into the minds of the young in such a form that with it grows up and is perpetuated the feeling of rivalry and of hostility against all other nations.

Conditions in Europe are intelligible only when we remember that by education patriotism is surrounded by a halo of sanctity, and that national self-preservation is considered the first duty.

If our public conscience is hardly strong enough to exact the faithful performance of the terms of a treaty in which only commercial interests are at stake, if we are restrained with some difficulty from aggres-

sion for the sake of economic advantage, it is at least intelligible why a government that sees the very existence of the nation endangered should, in a conflict of duties, reluctantly decide to set the safety of the nation for which it is responsible higher than the performance of a treaty inherited from a previous generation.

We must acknowledge that in such a case the demands of national and international duty are hopelessly at variance, and what line of action is chosen depends upon the conception of responsibility and upon the value given to the preservation of national existence.

NATIONALISM IN AMERICA

Since our own political interest in the war in Europe is weak, we stand naturally nearer to the standpoint of international morals and are inclined to misinterpret the motives that sway the nations at war. We should not deceive ourselves. It is only lack of immediate interest that determines our attitude. Owing to our more isolated position on the Western Hemisphere and to the great size of our country, we are not so much exposed to the conflicts between our interests, real or imaginary, and those of other nations.

Still we are no less eager than the nations of Europe to instil the idea of the preponderance of national interest over human interest into the minds of the young. We, too, teach rather the lessons of aggressive nationalism than those of national idealism, expansion rather than inner development, the admiration of warlike, heroic deeds rather than of the object for which they were performed. Given a national conflict, and the same unreasoning passions will sway our people that are carrying Europe to the brink of ruin.

Those who look forward to the federation of na-

tions must work together to teach their ideals to the young, to teach that no nation has the right to impose its individuality upon another one, that no war is justifiable except for the defence of the threatened integrity of our ideals.